Mercy Message: A Path to Peace

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Abstract

Every human being desires to live harmoniously together in the society with happiness. However, from current social conditions with differences in both conceptual mind and perception of people in the society, it has an impact on the conflict among people and continuous violence. There are many levels of conflict beginning from the inner-self, family, community, organization, public and private sectors till the violence and conflict among the countries. All of these result from an intense situation of lacking personal as well as social peaceful states. One of the factors reflecting the conflict violently is an informational conflict which includes a deficiency in the communicative method among human beings.

In this article, the writer points out a mercy communication of which contains a message with love, understanding, unbiased and unprejudiced interpretation. Moreover, it should also contain a wise attention towards the audiences in order to make them happy without any suffering or sorrow. As the writer has named this message as **"Mercy Message"** which adopts the Dhamma Teachings of the Buddha as its main focus and framework on the Four Divine States of Mind (Brahmavihāras) by applying Yonisomanasikāra, Subhàsitavàcà or a well-spoken speech and Kālāmasutta. In here, **"Mercy Message"** indicates that the communication process is a non-separated phenomenon with an interconnected relationship. By following this concept, people can communicate non-violently with more understanding and human beings can live happily together with both inner peace and outer peace.

Keywords: Buddhist Psychology, Mercy Message, Communication, Peace

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Introduction

In the current social situation, people live in a very hastened and fast track lives. Both the economical pressured atmosphere and the materialistic consumptive livelihood which is an aftermath of expand and open society. People receive dissimilar information from many channels and such data results in the belief, opinion and paradigm differences. One of the reasons is from the diversity in culture, geography, belief, religion, nation, language, etc. These factors barge an ethnic conflict as well as a continuous violence to the society. By looking back at the history of Thailand, it seems that the social violence is increasing as it begins to incline from the level of individually internal conflict then move up to the conflicts in family, community, organization, public and private sectors. These finally lead to the international conflict and violence, which as regards result in an intense social condition and a lack of peace in both anima and society.

Anyhow, the conflict phenomena and the violence issues are very common to the society as long as human beings live together with interconnection in positive or negative ways. One of the main causes that create confliction and disagreement has been resulted from the external and internal factors. To clarify, external conflict factors include public interest, power, relationship, value, data and structure conflicts (an interview with Venerable Hansa Dhammahaso, Assoc. Prof. Dr., 2014)[1]. Moreover, internal conflict factors include an unwholesome course of action (Akusala Kammapatha) and mental diffusion (Papancā), namely craving, dogma and conceit.

In accordance, one of the main factors that result in conflict and violence is an informational conflict, which means a deficiency in the communication process. According to the research of National Statistical Office (2010: p.13)[2], Institute for Research and Development, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) about the family relationship in Thailand, it indicates that, mostly, the major problem comes from the lack of skill in communication. This gives an effect in mutual understanding between the sender and the receiver in the family. Basically, it is due to the fact that people are not interested in the communication issue as well as they do not pay much attention on the self-learning and self-development. They are more aware on the financial and career issues in order to serve their natural survival instinct.

In reality, in this unavoidable commingled world, it is very essential for people to consider in living their way of life by learning through the ankle of cooperation also. This includes learning how to live together in harmony by focusing on the four basic developments namely self or body development, behavior development, mind development and wisdom development. People in either the family or the society have to learn how to develop their efficiency in adaptation in accordance with their interactive participants and diversified social situations. They should be aware of a compassionate concept of living a normal life with others in order to obtain a happy and peaceful well-being.

From the above-mentioned problem in the communication process, this article points out the issue relevant to one dimension in the process, informational conflict, which is a 'message' that people are using to communicate with each other; whether in the family, community, society or even in the international relationship between countries. The writer wants to present the concept about a message in communication that should be basically

[1] An Interview with Phra Maha Hansa Dhammahaso, Assoc. Prof. Dr. (15 December 2014). *The topic of Communication for Peace*. Peace Studies Room: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

[2] National Statistical Office (2010). Institute for Research and Development, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU). *Research on The Study and Development of the Model in Family Security and Assurance*. Bangkok: Sukhothai Thammathirat. p.13.

based on loving-kindness, understanding, non-bias, compassion as in overall can be called the message filled with mercy or '**Mercy Message**'. It should also integrate the knowledge of psychology of communication in the Buddhist dimension as well as with a touch of peaceful aromatic ingredients. Of which, the writer believes that these areas should not stand in separation but rather an integrated relationship in the process of communication for peace building which leads to a non-violence society and a peaceful co-existence.

Communication: Source of Conflict and Violence

According to Donna Bellafiore (2013)[3], it is undeniable that conflict between people is a fact of life. Conflicts occur at all levels of interaction. One of the main conflicts that people are facing in the society is a "conflict of information" or a "message" in the communication process. The message being sent is sometimes decoded, absorbed and interpreted differently from the sender's intention. For example, the same message maybe received and reacted differently depending on each individual. People are not born the same and it is no surprised that we are unique in many dimensions. There are many factors such as educational background, upbringing environment, mental basis, personal interest, experience, religion, economics and social status that form us to be who we are right now[4]. So, it is no surprised that the message we use to communicate is not the same in each person although in the same situation. Also, there is no wonder that the way we decode or interpret the message received in our brains is not the same as well.

Nevertheless, people try to conform to the society by communicating with others because we are afraid to stay alone and left out from the group. This idea complies with the Maslow's third basic need of human beings in love and belonging[5]. People need to be loved and accepted in their social groups, whether they are large or small. In order to maintain the healthy relationships at work, among friends, within families, between partners or in the communities; people need to learn how to communicate with another parties in the effective and compassionate way. There must be a way to communicate the message effectively and efficiently; to make the sender and the receiver feel happy and satisfied while sending and receiving the message; and to have a mutual understanding in the message not in the other way round.

In reality, it looks easy to say but very difficult to do. One of the main reasons is because most or some people are lack of the knowledge and understanding in both Buddhist and Psychological perspectives. This tends to cause the conflict in the relationships[6]. It is a fact that we cannot read another person's mind because we do not have a mind detector or telepathy. Sometimes this makes people confused in some messages being sent and this can lead to unsatisfied, ambiguous, uncertain, confused and unhappy feelings of many people. Consequently, people sometimes feel worried, sad, and angry as they are trapped in the maze of communication process. Thus, if we are capable of knowing and applying the Buddhism and Psychology of Communication integratedly, it can help lessen the conflict and violence

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[3] Donna Bellafiore (10 October 2013). *Interpersonal Conflict and Effective Communication*. Retrieved on 7 December 2015, from http://www.drbalternatives.com/articles/cc2.html

[4] Faculty of Lecturers from Psychology Department (1994). *Harmonize can be made*. Faculty of Psychology. pp. 12-13. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.

[5] Mark E. Koltko-Rivera (2006). Rediscovering the Later Version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Self-Transcendence and Opportunities for Theory, Research, and Unification. in: *Review of General Psychology*. Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 302-317. American Psychological Association.

[6] An Interview with Phra Maha Hansa Dhammahaso, Assoc. Prof. Dr. (15 December 2014). *The topic of Communication for Peace*. Peace Studies Room: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

in the relationships of families, communities, workplaces and society as well as bring more peace to the inner self of a person.

Psychology of Communication

Communication is about using symbol to communicate as to show an intention of the sender to the receiver, in case of human-beings; we use language as a symbol to communicate among us. The process of communication among human-beings is usually a natural occurred phenomenon. Sometimes, it happens automatically and so fast that people do not notice that the process of communication is already starting, going on and almost ending. Technically, a communication process means the exchange of information (normally a message) between two or more people. In 1948, Shannon and Weaver[7] introduced the standard of communication model which had three primary elements which were sender, channel and receiver; of which later on expanded into eight elements.

In 1960, David Berlo[8] expanded Shannon and Weaver's linear model of communication and introduced the SMCR or Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model of Communication. He mentioned about the concepts that the sender and receiver are different in certain realms namely communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system and culture. Furthermore, he also added that there are five sensory organs towards the channel namely hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting.

In 1954, Wilbur L. Schramm[9], a forefather in the growth of a basic model of communication, also expanded his model from the Shannon-Weaver transmission model of communication. Wilbur Schramm's 1954 model magnifies on this thinking by highlighting the process of encoding and decoding the message. Schramm proposed this process as a reciprocal circular communication between the sender and the receiver. In contradiction, the Shannon-Weaver model is a more mathematical and technological one, but Schramm incorporates the study of human behavior in the communication process. Schramm added the field of experience into the process of communication which consists of an individual's beliefs, values, experiences and learned meanings both as an individual or part of a group.

In terms of a message, Schramm suggested that it can be complicated by different meanings learned by different people. Meanings of the message can be either denotative or connotative. Denotative meanings are common or dictionary meanings and can be the same for most people. On the contrary, connotative meanings are expressive or evaluative and based on individual experience. A message can also have external and hidden meanings. Other features of messages that impact communication between two individuals are: intonations and pitch patterns, accents, facial expressions, quality of voice, and gestures. Furthermore, Dr. Schramm believed that all of these elements were important functions of communication in the society. He added that people in a society need information on their environment and methods of communicating in order to make choices[10]. An individual's knowledge, experience and cultural upbringing also play an important role in communication.

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[7] Shannon, C. E. A (1948). *Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Bell System Technical Journal, vol. 27, pp. 379-423 and 623-656, July and October, 1948.

[8] Berlo, D. K. (1960). *The process of communication*. New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

[9] Schramm, W. (1954). How communication works in W. Schramm (Ed.), *The process and effects of communication* (pp. 3-26). Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

[10] CommTheories (2015). *Wilbur Schramm*. Retrieved on 5 December 2015, from http://commtheories.wikispaces.com/Wilbur+Schramm

From the above different models from renowned scholars, we can see that people from different cultures, religion or background tend to interpret the message in dissimilar ways. Human communication can be marked by intention and anticipation of the reactions and communication in humans can be verbal when mediated by language or non-verbal when no language is involved. Communication can also be direct when a certain pattern of behavior evokes a particular type of response or subtle and indirect when behaviors are not predictable or ambiguous and not even completely comprehensible[11]. According to Saberi Roy (2009)[12], she clarified that Psychology of Communication mainly includes three different elements or stages of communication in an individual which are absorption (or taking in information), interpretation (or deriving meaning of the information) and reaction (or responding to the information).

As can be seen, a large portion of our lives is spent communicating with others. Sharing our thoughts and understanding another person's feelings are essential skills for functioning in any society in the world. Moreover, it is no surprised then that difficulty with communication is the number one issue that brings people to couples counseling[13], and is at the core of many other things that we are struggling with. The following is a simple model of communication that can help illustrate how communicating with others is unnoticeably going on in a daily life.

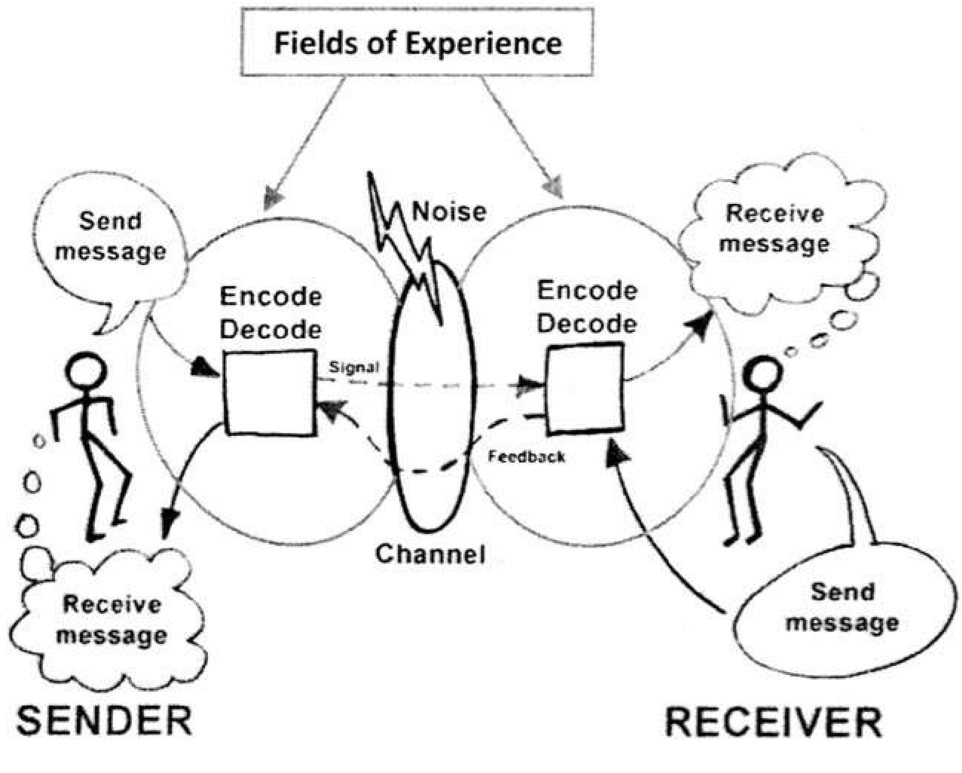


Diagram 1: Communication Process

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[11] Roy, S. (11 September 2008). *The Psychology of Communication*. Retrieved on 5 December 2015, from http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Psychology-of-Communication&id=1488330

[12] Saberi Roy (2009). Reflections in Psychology (Part I) : *The Psychology of Communication*. LuLu Publishingdotcom : Mneme Publishers.

[13] Elizabeth Kane. *Marriage Counseling-Part 2- Why Couples Seek Counseling*. Retrieved on 7 December 2015, from http://www.families.com/blog/marriage-counseling-part-2-why-couples-seek-counseling

From the above-mentioned statements, when the sender encodes the message into the communication process, it is the receiver who decodes or absorbs information through sensory organs whether it is the sounds and colors, the spoken words, the non-spoken words, the facial expressions and all external data provided in the process. This absorption is an objective process. Then the decoder has to analyze and interpret the information going on in the process by involving the use of brain mechanisms and analyze external stimuli as well as details such as expressions and subtle verbal and/or non-verbal cues. The interpretation here is considered as a subjective process.

Following this process is the response to the stimuli which uses physical communication channels such as speech, language and/or expressions through facial and bodily movements. Here, reaction is the result of both subjective and objective process. The reason behind this is because when the receiver is presented with certain messages or stimuli, he or she has a set of predictable responses which are objective but depending on how the receiver decodes or interprets the situation subjectively.

Basically, everyone has a set of different schemata or prior experience and knowledge in each of us. So the ways we receive, interpret and react to the message are different. In the same situation with the same information, what we perceive, think, judge and react might not always be the same as others. This is where the conflict gets started. It may sound difficult but it is so true that the importance of mindfulness and consciousness in communicating our messages should be, at all time, aware and acknowledged by people in the communication process.

Communication in Buddhism

Buddhism is a nontheistic religion with the belief in cause and effect. Dhamma or the teachings of Lord Buddha relevant to the communication process is not only learned through just only the five senses as in the Western scholars define. However, Buddhism identifies 'six senses' as opposed to the Western identification of 'five senses'[14]. The six internal sense bases are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. In the communication process, all the five sense bases are considered to be 'body' of a sender (Berlo, D.K. 1960)[15]. However, in Buddhist world, we believe that 'mind' plays more important role than the body. It is the mind itself that controls the body to move, feel, touch, smell, speak, listen and so on. The functions of body process, learning and acquiring process, decision making process as well as communication process are based on the mind as a main leader in controlling and telling the body to perform different functions and actions. This is why an individual reaction to the same situation is diversified due to the fact that people with dissimilar behaviors have different minds. However, still we have to live together in this natural chaotic world.

In an earlier section, the writer mentions that people communicate together in order to conform to the society and as to fulfill our basic need. In order to tell one's inner needs and wants, a person uses verbal-communication, which is speech or spoken language and non-verbal communication, such as body language, gestures, dress, act, etc. In some cases, conflicts arisen because of the misunderstanding between the two parties as mentioned before. Sometimes, a person does not give full attention to the dialogue being said and that leads to the misinterpretation. In Buddhism, there is one discourse on the accomplishment of

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[14] Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trans.) (2000). *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya.* (Part IV is "The Book of the Six Sense Bases (Salayatanavagga)"). Boston: Wisdom Publications.

[15] Berlo, D.K. (1960). *The Process of Communication: Introduction to Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Richard Press.

"wise attention" called the Yoniso Manasikāra Sampadā Sutta (S 45.55)[16] which is succinct statement on wise attention spoken by the Buddha to an assembly of monastics. It means technically mentation, or more simply "direct the mind or attention in a certain way."[17] The term "wise attention" can also be translated more broadly as "wise reflection, reasoned attention and methodical consideration". By speaking only the truth and listening to the truth, without any delusions or biases, this will promote the arising of the wise attention in oneself, as we have the right understanding of true reality. This will open a blockage in the stream of communication process and flows a mutual understanding among the parties.

Mercy Message: What?

Along the line of communication process, sometimes people send the message which is not a factual message but rather the message that has been touched up by personal opinion. This is a message with prejudice (Agati) whether it is a prejudice caused by love or desire (Chandàgati), prejudice caused by hatred or enmity (Dosàgati), prejudice caused by delusion or stupidity (Mohàgati) or prejudice caused by fear (Bhayàgati)[18]. All of these kinds of prejudiced message will eventually lead to a message creating hostile feeling or 'Hate Speech[19]' which is one of the causes rooted in interpersonal and social conflicts such as family quarrels, school problems, workplace poor communication and social gap. According to the communication theory, it provides some insight into the harms caused by hate speech in both physical and emotional effects.

In psychological perspective, the message being sent out by each person can imply that person's behavior, attitude, value, lifestyle, background, or childhood about how he or she perceives and understands the world as distorted or real; and what that person thinks or feels at the moment. Emotional, fear, hatred, hostile and distrust messages are food for the conflict to cultivate. They break a chain of effective communication by a faulty message.

As communicators send and receive messages, there is an enormous opportunity for slippage in the sequence of what is meant, said, heard, or understood.[20] Sometimes, the conflict parties communicate words and non-verbal messages by what they want to say and fail to say. This usually ends up in miscommunication or misunderstanding between the senders and receivers. Adversely, if a person sends out a message filled with well-intention, mercy and understanding, this helps creating a bridge of connection between senders and receivers.

In this article, the writer attempts to identify the word '**Mercy Message**' as a piece of verbal information or non-verbal message being sent by a human being to another party in the communication process, through various channels. This contains a 'disarming' language with benevolent, compassionate, careful, precise and friendly words and it uses questions rather than statements or dictations. Also, it should contain non-hostile intonations, non-accusatory pauses, and/or other non-verbal messages that, at all time, convey the feelings of loving-kindness, compassion and non-hostility between senders and receivers.

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[16] See *Yoniso Sutta* S 45.55/5:31

[17] Yoniso Manasikāra Sampadā Sutta: The Discourse on the Accomplishment of Wise Attention (S 45.55/5:31), translated by Piya Tan (2007, 2010). *PTS: Yoniso Sutta – The Discourse on Being Wise. The internal condition for the noble eightfold path*. pp. 169-172.

[18] Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 31st Edition (2015). *Dictionary of Buddhism*. pp. 149. Bangkok: Pli Dhamma Publishing Company.

[19] John T. Nockleby, "Hate Speech," in Encyclopedia of the American Constitution. Ed. Leonard W. Levy and Kenneth L. Karst. Vol. 3. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000. p. 1277-1279.

[20] Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr (2002). *Using Conflict Theory*. USA: Cambridge University Press. pp. 152-154.

The nature of Mercy Message should be based on the Four Divine States of Mind or Brahmavihāras, which are a series of four Buddhist virtues and the meditation practices made to cultivate them, namely loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), empathetic joy (Muditā) and equanimity (Upekkhā). They are also known as the Four Immeasurables or Appamaññā which are:

1. Loving-kindness (Mettā) towards all. It is the hope that a person will be well; "the wish that all sentient beings, without any exception, be happy".
2. Compassion (Karuṇā) is the hope that a person's suffering will diminish; "the wish for all sentiment beings to be free from suffering."
3. Empathetic joy (Muditā) is the joy in the accomplishments of a person–oneself or another; sympathetic joy; "the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in happiness and virtues of all sentient beings".
4. Equanimity (Upekkhā) is the learning to accept loss and gain, good-repute and ill-repute, praise and censure, sorrow and happiness, all with detachment, equally, for oneself and for others. Equanimity is "not to distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal. It is a clear-minded tranquil state of mind–not being overpowered by delusions, mental dullness or agitation.[21]

In the Pali canon, the Buddha recommended cultivating these four virtuous mental states to both householders and monastics. When one develops these four immeasurables, the Buddha counsels radiating them in all directions: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility and free from ill-will.[22] Such so, in order to engender a Mercy Message; there are certain factors that circle around the message which can be shown in the diagram.

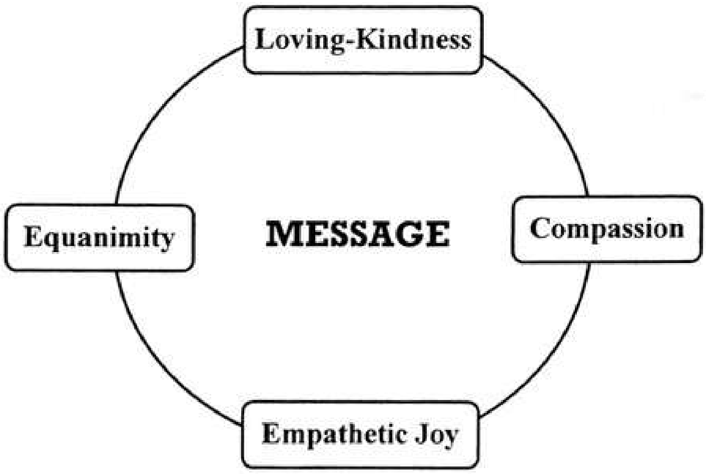


Diagram 2: Mercy Message

[21] Buddhist Studies for Secondary Students. *UNIT 6: The Four Immeasurables*. Retrieved on 17 December 2015, from http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/bs-s15.htm

[22] Kalama Sutta: To the Kalamas (AN 3.65), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 17 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.than.html

These virtues are also highly regarded by Buddhists as powerful antidotes to negative mental states (non-virtues) such as avarice, anger and pride[23]. Whenever, there is an uprising of the arming language or any kinds of hostile message within an individual mind, if one is often trained and practiced oneself by taking each of the immeasurables in turn and applying it to oneself, and then to others nearby, and to everybody in the society, and so on to everybody in the world. There is no wonder that the practitioners can gradually diminish non-virtues and appreciate the present moment of peace, happiness and tranquility.

Mercy Message: How?

In this section, the question raised on "How can one achieve a Mercy Message in the communication process?" The writer beliefs that it has to start within one's own self. A person, either the sender or the receiver, has to embrace love and feel benevolent to oneself first before he or she can send out the loving-kindness and compassion to another. Ones send out a Mercy Message naturally when they practice to cultivate Brahmavihāras with an insight contemplative meditation. This is a path to permanently attain companionship, peace and happiness; and communion with ethnic groups, social communities and the world. In the Tevijja Sutta[24], the Buddha was asked the way to communion with Brahma. He replied that he personally knew the world of Brahma and the way to it, and explained the meditative method for reaching it by using an analogy of the resonance of a conch shell of ashtamangala.

A monk suffuses the world in the four directions with a mind of benevolence, then above, and below, and all around – the whole world from all sides, completely, with a benevolent, all-embracing, great, boundless, peaceful and friendly mind ... Just as a powerful conch-blower makes himself heard with no great effort in all four directions, so too is there no limit to the unfolding of heart-liberating benevolence. This is a way to communion with Brahma.[25]

Moreover, the four immeasurables are explained in "The Path of Purification" (Visuddhimagga, Chapter IX)[26], written by Buddhaghoṣa, Theravada Buddhist scholar and commentator, in the 5th century. This tradition approach signifies the successive stages of mediation during which one progressively cultivates benevolence towards friendship and non-violence in six directions which are:

1. Oneself
2. A good friend
3. A neutral person
4. A difficult person
5. All four of the above equally
6. And then gradually the entire universe

[23] Brahmavihāra. *Wikipedia the free* encyclopedia. Retrieved on 13 December 2015, from http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmavihara

[24] A Discourse to Knowers of Veda: Tavijja Sutta, *A Discourse of the Buddha on the Path to the Divine*. Translated by Prof. T.W. Rhys Davids, With Introduction and Notes by Paul Debes, (BPS Online Edition, 2008). Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. The Wheel Publication No.57-58.

[25] *Majjhimanikaya*, translated by Kurt Schmidt, Kristkeitz, Berlin (1978). P. 261, trans. Tony page.

[26] Visuddhimagga. *The Path of Purification* by Buddhaghoṣa Thera. Translated by Somdej Phra Buddhajarn (Arj Asabha Mahathera), (2008). R.O.C.: The Corporation Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation. pp. 482-500.

Practice includes reciting specific words, phrases and non-verbal language in order to evoke a boundless warm-hearted feeling, or visualizing suffering and wishing well for those sentient beings. Practitioners or message senders speak and/or use gestures to receivers with cares, independent of approving or disapproving of them, or expect nothing in return. This will sequentially bring up a non-referential compassion or a pure compassion, involves experiencing the wish and care for another sentient beings to end their sufferings. Consequently, ones will experience the true happiness in another beings' happiness, like one's own self. By adopting the Buddha teachings into practice, there is no ground for being attached to some and hating others since there is no one sentient being, who has not been one's friend and relative in this unknown and beginning-less cycle of existence. Hence, ones should develop and meditate on equanimity to surpass all ill-wills when sending a message and equally accept everyone as companion in this Saṃsāra.

Inevitably, to send out a message, we need a person to process. The question relevant here is "How to be a mindful and contemplative sender in Buddhist perspective?" According to the Buddha doctrines, it is the 'Right Speech' (Sammā Vāċā) that belongs to the virtue division of the Noble Eightfold Path which is an abstaining from the lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech and from idle chatter[27]. A person can be successful in communicating with the others by purifying one's verbal action in four ways as mentioned in an earlier content.

"Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth and is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world."

"Abandoning divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here, he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there, he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus, reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord and speaks things that create concord."

"Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large."

"Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed and connected with the goal."

Furthermore, there are five keys for an individual to communicate a statement with the Right Speech. In Vaca Sutta, it states that such kind of statement should be endowed with the five factors which characterized as well-spoken, not ill-spoken, blameless and unfaulted by knowledgeable people[28]. For such speech:

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[27] Magga-Vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path (SN 45.8), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 13 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.008.than.html

[28] Vaca Sutta: A Statement (AN 5.198), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (3 July 2010). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 13 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.198.than.html

"It is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially. It is spoken with a mind of good-ill."

In congruence with this Sutta, there is a basic morality in virtue of verbal action that an individual should observe at all time, namely 'Well-Spoken Speech' (Subhàsitavàcà). This means that an individual mind is made pure by self-purification through a well-chosen speech[29].

"One should speak only that word by which one would not torment oneself nor harm others. That word is indeed well spoken."

"One should speak only pleasant words, words which are acceptable (to others). What one speaks without bringing evils to others is pleasant."

"Truth is indeed the undying word; this is an ancient verity. Upon truth, the good say, the goal and the teaching are founded."

"The sure word the Awakened One speaks for the attainment of nibbana, for making an end of suffering, is truly the best of words."

For an individual to obtain the Right Speech, there are certain factors that circle around the mindful and contemplative speaker which can be shown in the below diagram.

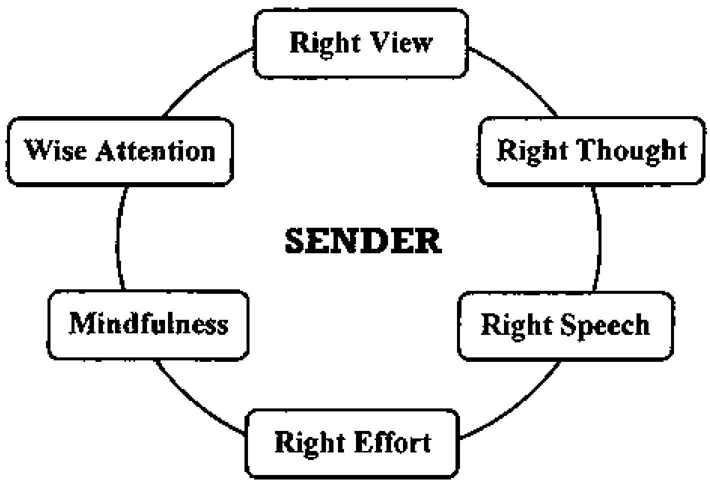


Diagram 3: Contemplative Sender

Following the above-mentioned, the other end of the communication process that needs an attention is the receiver. The question raised here is the same that "How to be a mindful and contemplative receiver in Buddhist perspective? In our daily life, we can ask

[29] Vaniga (Thag 21), translated from the Pali Version by John D. Ireland (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 13 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.21.00.irel.html#poem-05

ourselves that how many times we interrupt another person while he or she is talking and is not yet done that conversation. Often, there are so many times that we are formulating our thoughts, thinking about what to say next, sometimes, even before our colloquists are done speaking. It is not easy to be a good and mindful speaker but it is rather difficult to be an attentive and good listener. Most of our problems in life, at home, at school, at work or in the society, happen due to a lack of attention in listening. We do hear others but we do not actually listen mindfully and intentionally to them. Also, we may jump to a conclusion very swiftly, and often we become judgmental too quickly.

There is one research study regarding the communication of examined different parameters of emergency medicine residents taking a medical history[30]. The study concluded that only 20% of patients completed their presenting complaint without interruption. In other words 80% of the patents were interrupted during their initial presenting complaint. The average time to interruption was only 12 seconds. Similarly, in a clinical study of Dr. Piyal Walpola[31], a mindful listening can also increase the efficiency of a medical practice.

According to the Buddhist texts, there is one teaching of the Lord Buddha in Sussusa Sutta about listening well. This Sutta explains the process of listening mindfully. This disclosure was mainly taught by the Lord Buddha to teach his disciples how to listen to Dhamma (his teachings). But the writer believes it can also be applied to people in other situations in life as well. This Sussusa Sutta has been translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu[32] as follows:

"Endowed with these six qualities, a person is incapable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities even when listening to the true Dhamma. Which six?"

"When the Doctrine & Discipline declared by the Tathagata is being taught, he does not listen well, does not give ear, does not apply his mind to gnosis, grabs hold of what is worthless, rejects what is worthwhile, and is not endowed with the patience to conform with the teaching."

"Endowed with these six qualities, a person is incapable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities even when listening to the true Dhamma."

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[30] Karin V. Rhodes, MD (2004). *Resuscitating the physician-patient relationship: emergency department communication in an academic medical center*. Annals of Emergency Medicine: An International Journal, vol. 27, issue 3, pp. 262-267.

[31] Dr. Piyal Walpola (23 September 2007). *"Just Shut Up and Listen" How to be a mindful listener – in Buddhist perspective.* Wisdom Through Mindfulness. Retrieved on 14 December 2015, from http://wisdomthroughmindfulness.blogspot.com/2007/09/just-shut-up-and-listen-how-to-be.html

[32] Sussusa Sutta: Listening Well (AN 6.88), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (4 July 2010). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 14 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.088.than.html

"Endowed with these six qualities, a person is capable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities even while listening to the true Dhamma."

From the above Buddha teaching of how to listen well, it can be summarized into six applicable steps which are listed here.

1. Listen (Receive) with full mindful attention.
2. Try to remember what has been told.
3. Investigate for yourself.
4. Discard what is not useful to you.
5. Accept what is useful to you.
6. Apply to your life.

Further area of Buddhism in receiving information is about the friendship or an interaction between people in the conversation. As a matter of fact that we cannot live alone since we have to connect with others, remain in friendships and communicate to another. In some or many occasions that we just believe what we have been told from the sources that we trust. We, sometimes, jump to a conclusion without any hesitation whether that story is real or not. This kind of trust and believe can create misunderstanding and conflict if the story being heard is not the truth. Even worse, if we spread out the story which is not true, to another party, then it creates a lying, distrust, or rumor with a feedback of resentment and anger among people in the process. So a friendship where one has an admirable people as friends, companions and colleagues is considered the "whole of the holy life" (SN 45.2).

A statement spoken by the Lord Buddha to Venerable Ananda in Upaḍḍha Sutta (SN 45.2)[33] is identical to that of the Kalayāṇa Mittatā Sutta (S 45.49)[34] about an admirable friendship. The Awakened One here addressed that:

"Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path."

This can also be applied to the real world, for the writer's opinion, that if a person has an admirable friendship, it can penetrate right view, right understanding and right speech from the sender to the receiver very smoothly and easily. In congruence, by so having, an individual needs to listen and receive information with wise attention to what being said. This will prevent the wrong view to be happening. There are two ways in which 'wrong views' arises, that is, through listening to others (Parato Ghosa) and through unwise attention (Ayoniso Manasikāra). According to Ghosa Sutta: Voice (AN 2.125-126)[35], the passage states that:

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[33] Upaḍḍha Sutta: Half (of the Holy Life), (SN 45.2), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 15 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.002.than.html

[34] Admirable friendship: *Kalyanamittata*, edited by Access to Insight. (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 15 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca4/samma-ditthi/kalyanamittata.html

[35] Ghosa Suttas: Voice (AN 2.125-126), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 15 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an02/an02.125-126.than.html

"Monks, there are these two conditions for the arising of wrong view. Which two? The voice of another and inappropriate attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of wrong view."

"Monks, there are these two conditions for the arising of right view. Which two? The voice of another and appropriate attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of right view."

Last but not least here, there is a discourse taught by the Lord Buddha about justification before one believes in something that has been taught and told. The instruction of the Kalamas (Kalama Sutta)[36] is very famous for its encouragement of free inquiry; the spirit of the Sutta signifies a teaching that is exempt from fanaticism, bigotry, dogmatism and intolerance[37]. In this Sutta, it is indeed the whole course of training for wisdom culminating in the purity of the consummate one. It is intimately bound up with examination and analysis of things internal that are: the eye and visible objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile impressions, the mind and ideas. Simply put into words, in this Sutta, it is active in rejecting the bad and adopting the good way by using one's own judgment and wisdom in the sense of right and wrong. The ten points are as follows:

1. Do not simply believe what you hear just because you have heard it for a long.
2. Do not follow tradition blindly merely because it has been practiced in that way for many generations.
3. Do not be quick to listen to rumors and hearsay.
4. Do not confirm anything just because it agrees with your scriptures.
5. Do not foolishly make assumptions.
6. Do not abruptly draw conclusions by what you see and hear.
7. Do not be fooled by outward appearances.
8. Do not hold on tightly to any view or idea just because you are comfortable with it.
9. Do not accept as fact anything that you yourself find to be logical.
10. Do not be convinced of anything out of respect and deference to your spiritual teachers.

For a receiver, by adopting this Sutta into daily life, he or she can go beyond his or her opinion and belief. A well-trained receiver can justifiably reject anything which; when listened, accepted, practiced and perfected, leads to more aversion, conflict and violence. Conversely, a receiver can accept anything which; when listened, accepted and practiced, leads to harmony, unconditional love, compassion, empathetic joy and wisdom.

Furthermore, by applying these ten points into the communication process by a receiver, any view or belief must be tested by the results it yields when put into practice. This will help a receiver to guard against the possibility of any bias or limitations in one's understanding of those results. Also, they must further be checked against the experience of people who are wise. The ability to question and test one's beliefs in an appropriate way is

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[36] See ***Kalama Sutta*** AN 3.65

[37] Kalama Sutta: The Free Charter of Free Inquiry, translated from the Pali Version by Soma Thera. (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 16 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/soma/wheel008.html

called appropriate attention. The ability to recognize and choose wise people as mentors is called having admirable friends[38].

Hence, in order to be a mindful and contemplative receiver, a person has to train and practice one's mind continuously through Dhamma teachings. As so, for an individual to be attentive and mindful while listening and receiving, there are certain factors that circle around the contemplative receiver which can be shown in this diagram.

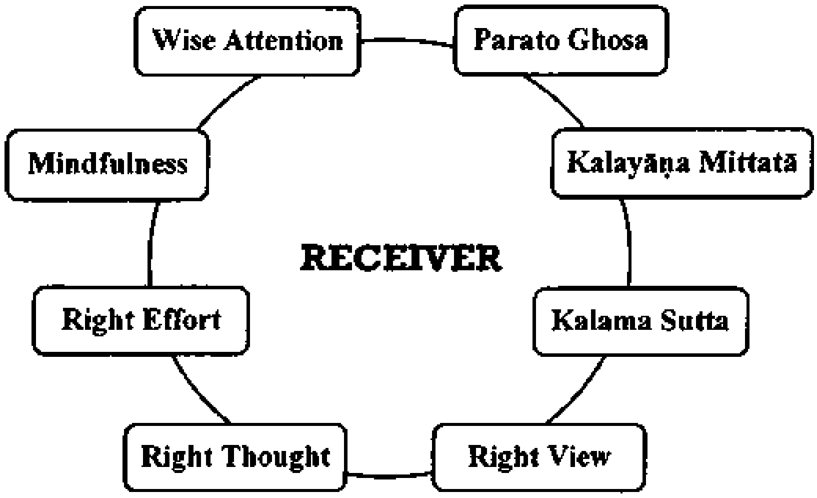


Diagram 4: Contemplative Receiver

Mercy Message: Why?

All sentient beings desire happiness and peace in life; and they do not desire misery and suffering. By practice using Mercy Message, based on the contemplation of Brahmavihāras in the communication process, the writer is confident that in some way or another we can avoid using harsh and hostile language which is one cause of social conflict and violence in the family and community. This will induce changes in the society and bring happiness and peace to all sentient beings with a number of benefits – both physical and mental health and overall well-being.

There are a few psychological studies about the impact on human beings such as one study done at Stanford University suggests that a short–seven minutes–practice of benevolence can increase social connectedness[39]. Research by APS William James Fellow Ed Diener, a leading researcher in positive psychology, and APS James McKeen Cattell Fellow Martin Seligman, a pioneer of the psychology of happiness and human flourishing, suggests that connecting with others in a meaningful way helps us enjoy better mental and physical health and speeds up recovery from disease; furthermore, research by Stephanie

[38] Kalama Sutta: To the Kalamas (AN 3.65), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. (30 November 2013). *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, Retrieved on 16 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.than.html

[39] Cendri A. Hutcherson, Emma M. Seppala, and James J. Gross (2008). *Loving-Kindness Meditation Increases Social Connectedness*. the American Psychological Association. California: Stanford University. Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 720 –724.

Brown, at Stony Brook University, and Sara Konrath, at the University of Michigan, has shown that it may even lengthen our life spans[40].

Furthermore, in traditional Buddhism, there are 10 benefits mentioned in the Pali Canon from the practicing of benevolence meditation including:

One sleeps easily, wakes easily, dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings. The Devas protect one. Neither fire, poison, nor weapons can touch one. One's mind gains concentration quickly. One's complexion is bright. One dies unconfused and – if penetrating no higher – is headed for the Brahma worlds.[41]

Conclusion

In human communication, the processing information devices are people engaged in the dialogue – the sender and the receiver – who use language to convey ideas or mental representations. Language, either verbal or non-verbal, plays a very important role in the communication process as is often described as a code that uses words, phrases, sentences and gestures to convey meanings that the senders want to encode their ideas through speaking; and the receivers try to decode these words, phrases, sentences and gestures through listening in order to recover the underlying intentions and ideas.

However, in some or many occasions that information along the process, as called a 'message', is missed out through slippage or misunderstanding and misinterpretation by different receivers. In the same situation, one can perceive, interpret and react to a message differently depending on some factors such as education, value, background and so on. In a real world, ironically saying, a pinch of sugar that one thinks is already sweet for one's coffee might not be sweet enough or sometimes too much sweet for another. Congruently, in many circumstances, people in the process tend to perceive information based on their own personal knowledge, judgments, values and beliefs then formulate a message that neglects the sender's perspectives. This is always attached with biases, judgmental perspectives and own point of views. As a result, it creates a conflict of information among people in the process. And such kind of conflict has rooted in many problems in the society.

Accordingly, a conflict of information sometimes originates because of personal collision or disagreement in ideas, feelings, desires, or antagonism to principles between individuals or groups. More often, it begins with a little cause but then ends up with a big result to pay. So the participants have to pay attention to mindfulness in sending out and receiving in a message as communication is a socially situated process of "here and now". It is an instantaneously process with an autonomous response. The techniques suggested here emphasize on a message with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity or holy abidings of Brahmavihāras. An individual can practice and train oneself by radiating into six directions from an inner self then moves on to another who are the good, neutral, difficult ones, then to the four equally and gradually to the entire universe. This will eventually make a fine tune in creating atmospheric absorption of benevolence, compassion and communion to the world.

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[40] Emma Seppala (2013). *The Compassionate MindScience shows why it's healthy and how it spreads*. Observer: Association for Psychological Science, Vol.26, No.5 May/June, 2013. Retrieved on 16 December 2015, from http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2013/may-june-13/the-compassionate-mind.html

[41] Metta (Mettanisamsa) Sutta: Good Will (AN 11.16), translated from the Pali Version by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 23 July 2013. Retrieved on 16 December 2015, from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.016.than.html

Notwithstanding, in Buddhist perspectives, some certain characteristics to be a contemplative sender and receiver has been mentioned earlier in the content. A contemplative sender should acquire basic Dhamma in maintaining the Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Effort, Mindfulness and Wise Attention while, at all times, encoding the message. On the same basis, a contemplative receiver should also practice the Buddha Dhamma, to circle around the process of decoding; in Parato Ghosa, Kalayāṇa Mittatā, Kalama Sutta, Right View, Right Thought, Right Effort, Mindfulness and Wise Attention.

In Buddhism, we as Buddhists have been taught to believe in Karma which can be classified into three levels namely bodily action (Kàya-Karma), verbal action (Vacã-Karma) or mental action (Mano-Karma). Karma refers to the spiritual principle of cause and effect where intents and actions of an individual (cause) influence the future of that individual (effect). Generally, good intent and well deed contribute to good Karma and future happiness of a person and vice versa. Truthful speech, non-hostile language and compassionate verbal action – through way of Mercy Message – will bring good Karma, happiness and peace to the senders and receivers during the process. By doing so, people are able to innately develop a peaceful state of mind then live in a society with harmony and reconciliation.

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